

# PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

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Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in April 2005

## OAKDALE AVENUE DISTRICT

WEST OAKDALE AVENUE BETWEEN HALSTED STREET AND MILDRED AVENUE

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: c. 1890 - 1927

The Oakdale Avenue District is a distinctive collection of single-family houses and apartment buildings in the Lake View community area that exemplify the growth and development of this North Side neighborhood in the years immediately following its annexation by Chicago in 1889. The District's 31 buildings form an especially cohesive residential streetscape, with excellent craftsmanship and an intimate scale. Many such residential areas emerged during Chicago's explosive population growth during this period as newcomers flooded into the City, but subsequent demolition and redevelopment have destroyed the historic visual character of many of these neighborhoods. The Oakdale Avenue District is a significant, visually coherent and intact group of such housing.

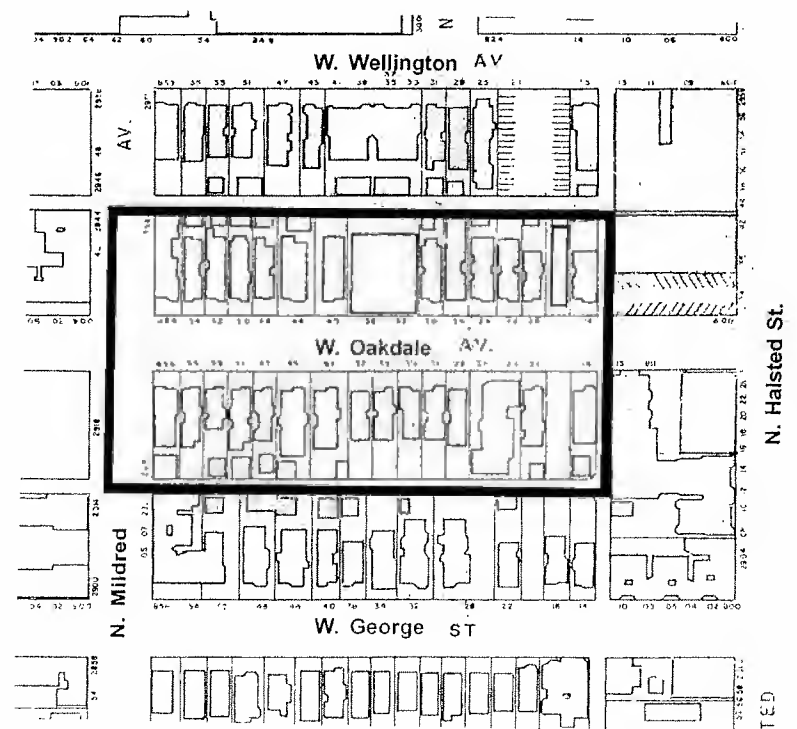
The growth of Lake View in general and Oakdale Avenue in particular during this period reflects the impact that improvements in mass transit had on development on Chicago's North Side. Improved transportation in the form of new and expanded street car lines and the developing rapid transit system, including the construction in the 1890s of the Northwestern Elevated Railroad (now the Chicago Transit Authority's Red and Brown Lines), was instrumental in attracting residents to what had been an outlying suburban town. Construction of the large majority of buildings on Oakdale coincided with the land survey, acquisition, and construction of the elevated structure, which began in 1894 and ended with the line's opening in 1900. The Wellington Avenue station, a block west and north of the western end of the District, provided ready access to the Loop and the rest of Chicago for local residents.

In addition, the Oakdale Avenue District exemplifies the ethnic diversity of Chicago's growing working- and middle-class neighborhoods in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the rapidly growing City accommodated large numbers of first- and second-generation immigrant families eager for attractive yet affordable housing. By 1900 large numbers of immigrants and newcomers moved into more comfortable homes away from the crowded tenements of the inner city. The District's buildings provided a variety of housing options including the opportunity for homeownership to both native-born citizens and several nationalities, with German and Swedish families predominating. Today the houses, flats, and apartment buildings along Oakdale still display the fine detailing and high quality materials that appealed to families a century ago.

## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF LAKE VIEW

The North Side community of Lake View that we know today is a fraction of the much larger Lake View Township that once extended as far north as Devon Avenue. The first European settlers to the area were Swiss-born Conrad Sulzer and his wife Christine. In 1836, the Sulzers journeyed beyond the then-forests of the northern limits (roughly North Avenue) of the newly incorporated City of Chicago and established a 100-acre farm along the "Ridge," near what is now the intersection of Montrose Avenue and Clark Street. In the years that followed, the fertile land of the Ridge was slowly settled by German and Swedish farmers.

The sandy marsh land along the northern shores of Lake Michigan remained vacant until 1853, when James Rees, a prominent surveyor and real estate speculator, bought 225



A map of the Oakdale Avenue District.



Above: The Oakdale Avenue District is located in the Lake View community area on Chicago's North Side. It consists of 31 buildings primarily located along Oakdale Avenue between Halsted and Mildred streets.

acres of lakefront property north of Belmont Avenue to develop as a country retreat. In 1854, Rees built a grand hotel with a veranda that offered a sweeping view of Lake Michigan. The hotel, located in the vicinity of what is now Grace Street and Sheridan Road, became known as the Lake View House and the surrounding area was dubbed Lake View Township. Many wealthy Chicagoans were attracted to the beauty of the rural, unspoiled lakeshore and built large summer homes near the Lake View House.

The Township of Lake View was officially organized in 1857. Its original boundaries stretched from Fullerton Avenue north to Devon Avenue and from the lakefront west to the North Branch of the Chicago River. From 1865 when the Township was incorporated as the town of Lake View, the area west of Broadway (then Evanston Street) remained predominately farmland and Lake View was known as "The Celery Capital of the United States" for its agricultural production of the vegetable .

After the Chicago Fire of 1871, residential development across the then-City of Chicago boundary at Fullerton into Lake View was encouraged by the extension of city mass transit services to the northern city limits at Fullerton Avenue. In addition, real estate developers and individual property owners could meet demands for more affordable housing with less expensive wood-frame dwellings in southern Lake View. (As a suburban town, Lake View was not subject to City building code requirements which prohibited frame construction after the Fire of 1871.) Still, Lake View as a whole remained sparsely populated, with streets for the most part unpaved with open ditches along either side.

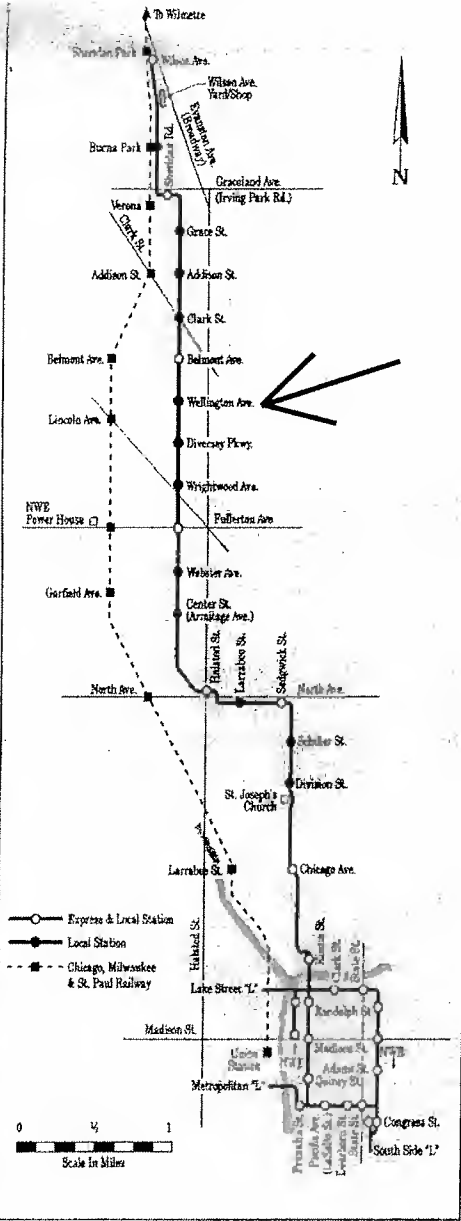
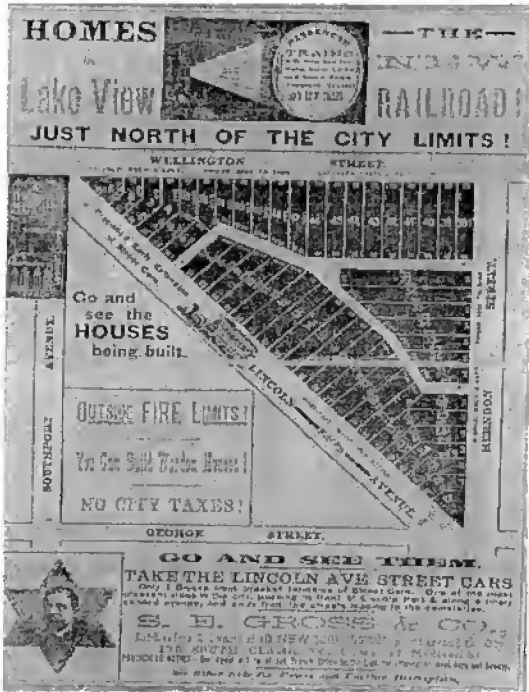
In the 1880s and 1890s, the establishment of several large industrial plants, including brick and terra cotta manufacturers, along the southern boundaries of the neighborhood encouraged the development of nearby residential neighborhoods of moderately-priced wood-frame homes. Also during this time, the earlier settlement along the lake shore sparked the creation of residential subdivisions in eastern Lake View that gradually expanded to the south and west.

In 1887 the town of Lake View was incorporated as a city, electing its own mayor and city council. Two years later, in 1889, Lake View was annexed to the City of Chicago. Considerable building activity in the community occurred during the 1880s and the early 1890s as residential building boomed and the population soared. The *Chicago Land Use Survey*, conducted in 1940 and published in 1942, estimated that 43 percent of all homes in Lake View at that time were built between 1880 and 1894.

This development was encouraged by improvements in mass transportation. By 1894, within five years of annexation, slow horsecar lines on Clark St. (then called Green Bay Rd.) and Halsted St. (the two main north-south streets near the Oakdale Avenue District) were upgraded to electric streetcars. Even more dramatic was the real estate development in eastern Lake View in the 1890s and early 1900s that was spurred by the construction of a North-Side elevated line to match others being built on the South and West Sides. Development of the Northwestern Elevated Railroad (now the Red Line of the Chicago Transit Authority) began in



Lake View began as an independent township north of the then-much smaller City of Chicago. Left: Lake View Town Hall. Middle left: In the late 1870s and 1880s, before its annexation by Chicago in 1889, Lake View was popular among working-class Chicagoans for the inexpensive wood-frame houses that could be built without the restrictions of the City's building code.



After annexation, eastern Lake View, including the Oakdale Avenue District, rapidly developed due to the construction of the Northwestern Elevated Railroad (now the Red Line of the Chicago Transit Authority). Bottom left: Construction of the elevated line. Bottom right: A map of the Northwestern line with its original stations. Wellington, the closest station to the District, is marked with an arrow.

1894 when the City Council and Mayor John P. Hopkins approved a privately-operated rapid transit franchise for the company. Surveying for the new elevated railroad's right-of-way, just east of Sheffield Avenue, began the same year, but construction delays and financing problems pushed the actual opening of the line back to 1900. Despite these delays, many property owners and developers constructed new buildings or substantially expanded existing structures on blocks near the new elevated line's stations in anticipation of increased demand for housing.

One of these new stations was at Wellington Avenue, near the western end of the District. Such easy proximity to rapid transit encouraged the rapid development of Oakdale with two- and three-flat buildings that were relatively large in scale compared to earlier frame and brick cottages and houses built in the area, maximizing the area's newly established attractiveness to both real estate buyers and renters.

By the 1920s, the residential areas of Lake View were almost fully developed. Census records show that its population, which had been steadily increasing, jumped from 60,535 to 96,482 in the decade between 1910 and 1920. With the exception of the factories and foundries of southwestern Lake View and mansions built primarily near the lake front, the vast majority of the neighborhood essentially remained a working- and middle-class residential community.

## DEVELOPMENT HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF BUILDINGS

Today the handsome buildings of the Oakdale Avenue District reflect the significant history of the development of Lake View and the importance of middle-class housing in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Chicago. Built in architectural styles that were important in the development of Chicago residential architecture during the period of the District's development, these buildings display fine craftsmanship in brick, stone, wood, and metal. Even more significantly, the buildings found in the District form a coherent streetscape that is visually distinctive within the larger context of the Lake View community.

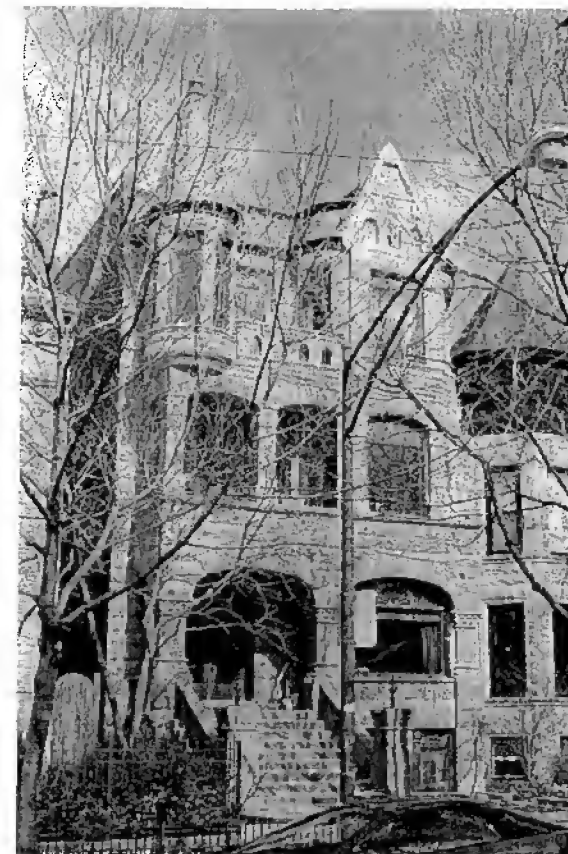
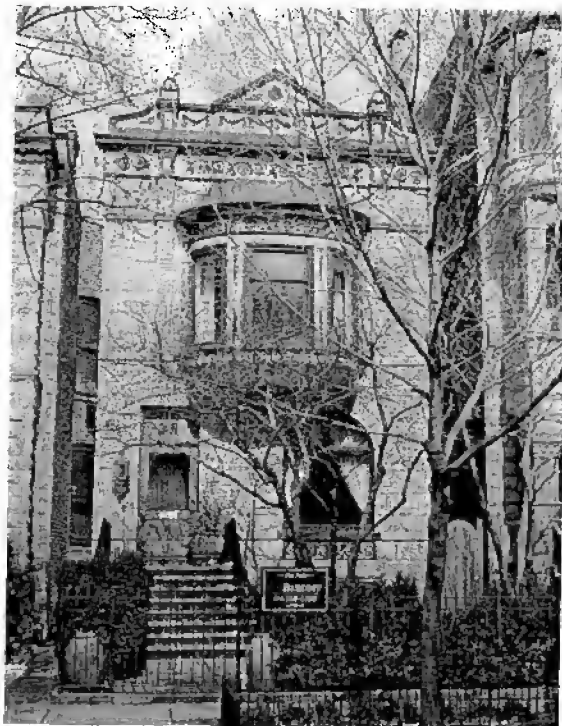
The area that today constitutes the Oakdale Avenue District was originally part of Woodland's Subdivision, which was recorded with the Cook County Recorder of Deeds on December 19, 1890, a year after Lake View was annexed by Chicago. The subdivision, bounded by Wellington, Mildred, George, and Halsted, bisected by Oakdale, was divided into typical Chicago urban lots of approximately 20 feet width. Such lots, along with increasing land values as the area became part of rapidly growing urban Chicago, encouraged the development of the tightly spaced buildings, both houses and flat buildings, that characterize the Oakdale Avenue District today. A uniform setback of roughly twelve feet from the street also was established that gives the street a distinct visual unity.

Middle-class individuals bought lots in Woodland's Subdivision and built the majority of the structures that we see in the Oakdale Avenue District today as their homes. Some of the buildings on the block, however, were developed by real estate investors. United



The historic buildings of the Oakdale Avenue District were built between circa 1890 and 1927, with more than two-thirds being built in the 1890s. The resulting streetscape is predominantly that of narrow two-, three-, and four-story buildings spaced closely to the street and each other.





A small number of buildings in the Oakdale Avenue District were built as single-family houses, including (top left) 826 W. Oakdale. The majority, however, were constructed as two-flats, including (top right) 814 W. Oakdale, (bottom left) 841 W. Oakdale, and (bottom right) 854 W. Oakdale Ave.

The District also contains several three-flats, including (top left) 824 W. Oakdale, (top right) 850 W. Oakdale, and (left) 847 W. Oakdale.

States census information indicates that the occupations of early residents of the District were generally those of entrepreneurs and professionals, although skilled craftsmen and their families also lived within the District. Today the workmanship, detailing, and high-quality materials of the buildings in the District reflects the values of its early middle-class residents.

More than two-thirds (19) of the buildings in the Oakdale Avenue District were constructed during the 1890s. Based on historic building permit and census records, a few of the buildings appear to have been built as single-family houses, while the large majority were built as two- and three-flat buildings. These buildings share certain visual characteristics, including masonry construction, asymmetrical raised entries, and ornamentation based on historic architectural styles concentrated around entryways, windows, and cornices.

Buildings in the Oakdale Avenue District are built of either brick or stone. The brick used for these buildings is predominately red, but other colors including yellow can be found among the District's buildings. Brick buildings in the District tend to be either the earliest buildings, built around 1890, or later buildings built after 1900. Stone is the building cladding that predominates in the District, used almost consistently for buildings built in the 1890s, the period of greatest development for the District. The type of stone favored by builders is gray Bedford limestone, quarried in central Indiana, and the stone of choice from the 1890s through the 1930s among Chicago architects and builders for its durability, ease of use, and relative inexpensiveness. However, some buildings in the District are clad with a rarer brownstone or pale yellow sandstone. Stone cladding was used for front facades, while side and rear elevations were typically clad with common brick, a common use of both materials for buildings in Chicago neighborhoods.

The colors and textures of brick and stone form an important part of the visual appeal of these buildings, emphasizing the intimate scale of the District's buildings. Handsome examples of brick construction include the two-flat at 831 W. Oakdale Ave. (built circa 1890), the two-flat at 814 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891), the corner apartment building at 858 W. Oakdale Ave. (1900), the two-flat at 820 W. Oakdale Ave. (1916), and the apartment building at 823-25 W. Oakdale Ave. (1927).

The variety of stone craftsmanship and detailing within the District is especially fine. Among excellent examples of such use of stone masonry are the limestone-fronted two-flat at 815 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891), the two-story house at 840 W. Oakdale Ave. (1892), the brownstone-clad two-flat at 841 W. Oakdale Ave. (1894), the two-flat at 845 W. Oakdale Ave. (1897), and the three-flat at 850 W. Oakdale Ave. (1894). Excellent stone detailing can be found throughout the District; a few examples among many include the two-flat at 854 W. Oakdale Ave. (1898).

Entrance steps for the District's buildings typically are built of wood or stone with either iron or stone railings leading to a small porch further embellished with stone, wood, or decorative metal. Many of the buildings retain original wooden entrance doors.



The District also contains several larger historic apartment buildings, including corner buildings such as (left) 859 W. Oakdale, and (bottom) half-court-yard buildings such as 823-25 W. Oakdale.





Buildings at 822, 835, 852, and 855 W. Oakdale (built in 1892, 1893, 1894, and 1898 respectively) are just four representative examples of buildings with handsome entrance details.

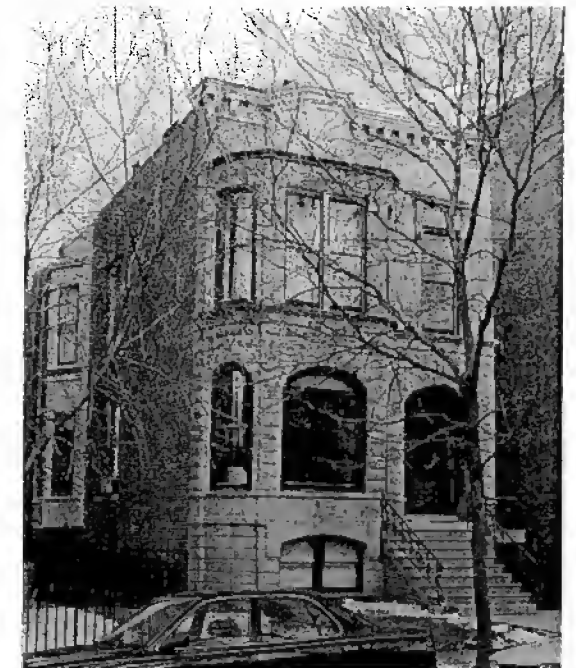
Building features common to many of the buildings on the block are projecting bays and cornices. An elaborately-detailed bay on 814 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891) is crafted of pressed metal and features paired colonettes and a variety of geometric motives. Other buildings with fine pressed-metal bays include 829 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891), 826 W. Oakdale Ave. (1893), and 859 W. Oakdale Ave. (1894). Several of the brick and limestone-fronted flats in the District have bays that are articulated at each level by horizontal banding. This is especially evident in the three-flats at 850 W. Oakdale Ave. (1894) and 852 W. Oakdale Ave. (1894).

In addition, most buildings within the District were originally topped by ornate pressed-metal cornices, and almost all of these remain. These cornices are ornamented with a variety of historic details, including paneling, pediments, swags, and small turrets. These cornices provide a highly decorative element to the streetscape within the District. Especially fine examples among many are found at 837 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891), 815 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891), 822 W. Oakdale Ave. (1892), 835 W. Oakdale Ave. (1893), 826 W. Oakdale Ave. (1893), and 855 W. Oakdale Ave. (1898).

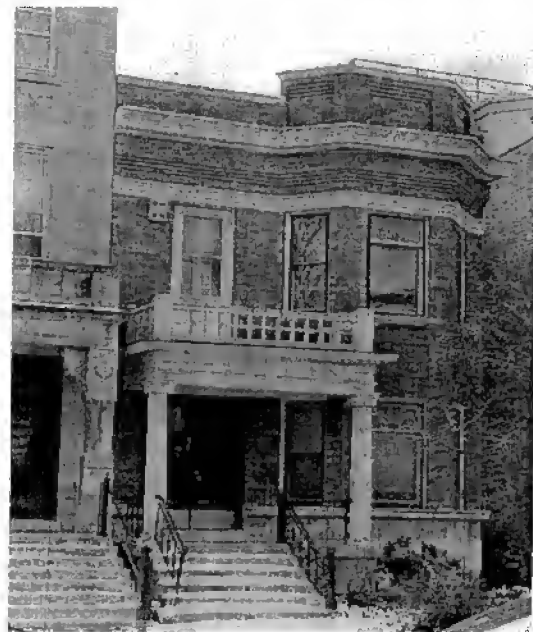
Although relatively little used for buildings in the District, terra cotta can be found on several buildings. Made of fire-hardened clay, terra cotta was prized by late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century architects for its durability and ability to take on a variety of shapes and colors inexpensively. An early example of red terra-cotta ornament is located at 829 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891), while the 3-story half-courtyard apartment building at 823-25 W. Oakdale Ave. (1927) has handsome cream-colored terra cotta used for window and door surrounds and fruit-decorated plaques.

The Oakdale Avenue District's houses and apartment buildings, including the two- and three-flats that predominate, exhibit a mix of stylistic influences. Such visual eclecticism is a characteristic of much late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century architecture, especially those buildings found in Chicago's neighborhoods. Many small-scale Chicago buildings of this period are not pure examples of any one style, but incorporate ornamental motives that recall particular styles, including Queen Anne, Eastlake, Romanesque, Classical Revival, and Arts-and-Crafts. Elements from each style were used sparingly or in a more simplified fashion to embellish the basic form of buildings such as the two- and three-flats that predominate on the street. These architectural styles give the buildings in the Oakdale Avenue District much of their visual richness and character.

The **Queen Anne** style was popular in Chicago during the 1880s and 1890s. The name was coined in England to describe asymmetrical buildings that combined medieval and classical forms and ornament. In America, the Queen Anne originally was used for suburban houses and seaside resort cottages, but it quickly became a popular style for both urban residences and commercial buildings that incorporate a plethora of historic



The buildings within the Oakdale Avenue District display historic architectural styles typical of Chicago neighborhood buildings built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and they often combine elements from more than one style. Top left: 831 W. Oakdale was designed in the Queen Anne style. 840 W. Oakdale (top right) and 815 W. Oakdale (bottom left) combine both Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival detailing. Above right: 835 W. Oakdale has an Eastlake-style front porch.



Several buildings in the District utilize the Classical Revival style, which became very popular in Chicago during the 1890. These include (top left) 854 and 852 W. Oakdale, (top right) 845 W. Oakdale, (bottom left) 851 W. Oakdale, and (bottom right) 858 W. Oakdale.

detailing in their overall designs. Buildings in the District with Queen Anne-style ornament include the brick two-flats at 831 W. Oakdale Ave. (circa 1890) and 814 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891). Queen Anne influences can especially be seen in the floral and geometric details found in pressed-metal cornices, including 837 W. Oakdale Ave. (1891), 826 W. Oakdale Ave. (1893), and 830 W. Oakdale Ave. (1903).

A related style is the **Eastlake** style, named for Charles Eastlake, a popular writer on architecture and decorative style in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Eastlake urged the use of machine-made ornament, especially wooden posts and spindles shaped on mechanized lathes and geometric patterns shaped from wood by steam-powered jigsaws. The building at 835 W. Oakdale Ave. (1893) has a front porch with turned-spindle decoration in the Eastlake style.

**Romanesque**-style architecture, based on 10<sup>th</sup>- and 11<sup>th</sup>-century medieval architecture, is perhaps the most common architectural stylistic influence, along with the Classical Revival, on buildings in the District. The style was inspired by the popularity of buildings designed by Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson during the 1880s and 1890s. Romanesque buildings typically have masonry walls, sometimes of brick, but often of rough- or smooth-faced stone, and are often ornamented with round-arched windows and short robust-looking columns with floral or geometric capitals. The style commonly was used for churches and public buildings, as its rough masonry surfaces projected a sense of strength and permanence, but it also proved popular for urban houses and commercial buildings. Several buildings in the District have Romanesque-style detailing in their rough-cut stone walls, round-arched windows, massive-looking porch railings and columns, and medieval foliate detailing. Examples among many are 815, 840, 833, 821, and 824 W. Oakdale Ave.

The **Classical Revival** style became popular in the 1890s in the aftermath of the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. Based on the Classical architecture of ancient Greece and Rome as well as later interpretations by Renaissance and Baroque architects, the Classical Revival style utilizes forms such as triangular pediments, Classical columns and moldings, balustrades, and keystone-embellished lintels. Buildings in the District with Classical detailing include 822, 852, 854, 851, and 858 W. Oakdale Ave.

By the early 1900s, the **Arts and Crafts** movement had taken hold of popular American imagination. Inspired by progressive European architecture of the 1890s, Arts-and-Crafts architecture often was simply ornamented and without obvious historic ornament. Instead, the visual appeal of such buildings was based on the innate visual characteristics of building materials, including both color and texture. Buildings such as 820 W. Oakdale Ave. and 2915 N. Mildred St. (the rear building to 859 W. Oakdale Ave.) exhibit Arts-and-Crafts influences.





The District's buildings are finely crafted in a variety of historic building materials, including brick, sandstone, limestone, pressed metal, cast and wrought iron, wood, and terra cotta. Examples include (top left) 815 W. Oakdale, (top right) 829 W. Oakdale, (middle left) 841 W. Oakdale, (middle right) 859 W. Oakdale, (bottom left) 847 W. Oakdale, and (bottom right) 840 W. Oakdale).

The last of the buildings built during the District's period of significance, the 3-story brick half-court yard building at 823-25 W. Oakdale Ave., was built in 1927. Its **Renaissance Revival**-inspired round-arched windows and cream-colored terra-cotta ornamentation, which contrasted with the building's yellow brick walls, is typical of many buildings built in Chicago in the 1920s, a period of exuberant eclecticism in decorative architectural designs.

Taken as a whole, the Oakdale Avenue District exemplifies the visual coherence and attractiveness of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century architectural design as applied to Chicago neighborhood buildings. Individual buildings are handsomely detailed with historic ornament and beautifully-crafted materials. They share common scale, setbacks, and attitudes concerning use of traditional materials (brick, stone, wood, and metal) and historic architectural styles. The streetscape of the District exemplifies the ability of individual late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century developers, architects, and builders to create a consistent and satisfying streetscape out of distinctively-designed individual buildings.

### **“FLAT” BUILDINGS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE 1890S AND EARLY 1900s**

The Oakdale Avenue District with its rows of tightly-spaced two- and three-flats reflects the increasing density and building scale that many once-outlying suburban areas developed upon their annexation by Chicago in 1889. These neighborhoods, especially those with ready access to downtown through newly established streetcar and elevated lines, developed with buildings that reflected both the increasing land values of these areas and the middle- and working-class Chicagoans, many of them immigrants, that wanted attractive yet affordable housing. In Chicago, as in many growing American cities, free-standing single-family houses and row houses, the long-time staples of housing, were being supplemented by the development of small two- and three-story apartment buildings. Such buildings, including two-, three-, and six-flats, and a variety of other apartment building types, including corner, common corridor, and courtyard buildings, became staples in the development of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Chicago neighborhoods. The Oakdale Avenue District, with its especially handsome grouping of houses and small apartment buildings built principally between 1890 and 1927, is a visually distinctive example of this important aspect of Chicago neighborhood development.

The apartment building as a housing type is ancient, dating back at least to ancient Rome and its many *insulae*, or multi-story brick apartment blocks. In America however, apartment buildings did not begin to be built until the 19th century when both population growth and land and building costs worked together to create a need for multi-family residential buildings. In the country's early years of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, even its largest cities such as New York and Boston were made up mostly of single-family houses and row houses. Individuals and families that either did not want or could not afford such housing usually rented rooms in houses; the term “apartment” originally

referred to a room in a house set aside for a separate occupant, rather than a coherent suite of rooms physically separate from others like it under a common roof and with common service spaces such as vestibules and hallways.

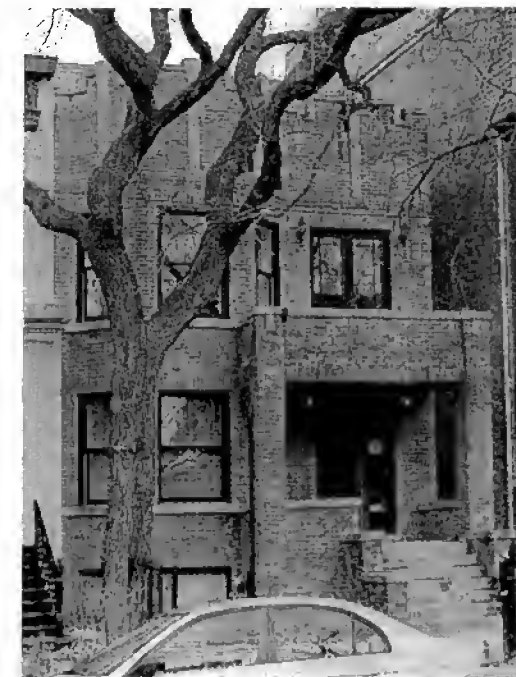
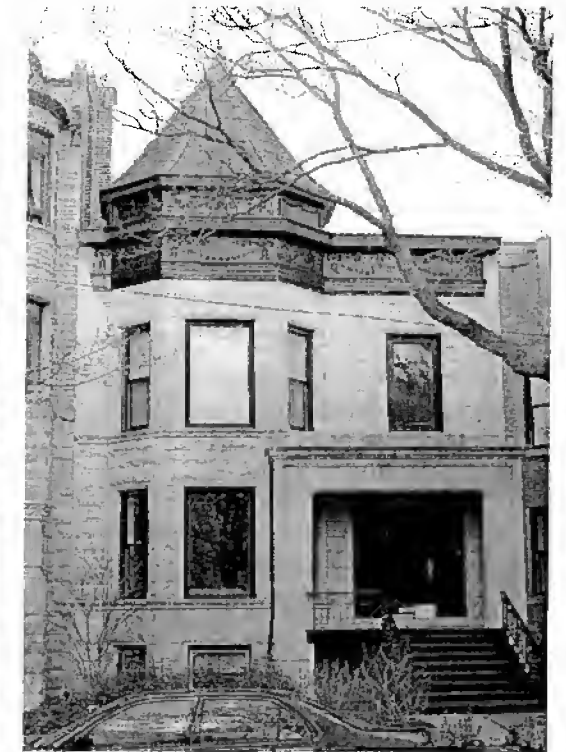
By the mid-19th century, land and building costs were changing the ways people lived. Initially the largest number of early multi-family buildings in industrial cities such as New York and Chicago were tenements housing numerous poor families, many of whom were immigrants. Apartment buildings had become known popularly as “French flats” due to the preponderance of apartment buildings in Paris and were seen as somehow un-American and not considered suitable housing. Small apartment buildings with relatively spacious apartments, such as those found in the buildings along Oakdale, began to be built only as middle- and upper-class tastes began to change. As single-family houses on individual lots became prohibitively expensive to all but the wealthy, and even attached row houses began to be beyond the reach of middle-class incomes, apartment buildings became more acceptable. For working- and middle-class families, these buildings offered an alternative to tenement buildings and the overcrowded culture of the slums.

During the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, small walk-up apartment buildings of two- to five-stories began to be built in many American cities. For example, four- and five-story apartment buildings in New York began to rise next to brownstone and brick row houses. In Boston, freestanding wood “triple-deckers,” apartment buildings similar to Chicago’s three-flat buildings, became common. Many middle-class Washington D.C. residents dwelled in three-story attached brick buildings known locally as “rowhouse flats.”

These small apartment buildings in general had apartments with greater square footage and larger rooms than those in tenement buildings. Ventilation was better, with each room having at least one window, and up-to-date amenities such as steam heat were the rule. These buildings were most often built by commercial builders who soon developed standardized floor plans and apartment features based on local demand. They often were bought by individual owners who occupied one apartment while renting out others. This allowed many middle-class families to become home owners despite rising urban housing costs.

Various configurations of apartment buildings began to be developed in Chicago by builders and developers eager to cater to buyers. In the 1870s and 80s, the most common were small, two- and three-story buildings that were slightly narrower than one standard Chicago lot (approximately 25 feet) in width. Sometimes these buildings, especially those built along streets with streetcar lines, had shops on the first floor while apartments occupied upper floors. They were most often built of brick, sometimes with stone fronts, although wood remained common in outlying neighborhoods outside the so-called “fire limits,” where city building codes mandated masonry construction in the wake of the Fire of 1871. These apartment buildings were usually built in the then-popular Italianate or Queen Anne styles.

The Oakdale Avenue District is a significant grouping of Chicago two- and three-flats,



The Oakdale Avenue District contains a variety of apartment buildings, especially two- and three-flats built between circa 1890 and 1916. These include (top left) 821 W. Oakdale, (top right) 822 W. Oakdale, (bottom left) 820 W. Oakdale, and (bottom right) 2915 N. Mildred.

with 21 of the District's 31 buildings being this type of structure. It consists of a coherent set of streetscapes that relate the history of residential real estate development in east Lake View during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. When the Oakdale Avenue District began to be developed in the 1890s, small apartment buildings containing two or three apartments were becoming common in new middle- and working-class neighborhoods, and many residential streets were lined with such structures. These Chicago "two-flats" and "three-flats," as they have become known, were built with a wide variety of building details but usually followed certain basic configurations of form. They usually had rectangular floor plans with the narrow end facing the street, maximizing valuable street frontage, and were built one apartment per floor atop raised basements. Roofs typically were flat and brick, stone, or metal bays often projected towards the street, increasing available light and air for front rooms in the buildings. Wood or stone steps flanked with iron or stone railings typically led to a small front porch, with double doors set to one side of the building's front facade. The entrance doors, usually detailed with wood and glass panels, led to a small vestibule. The first-floor apartment opened directly onto this vestibule, while a staircase (accessed through a separate door) led to the upper-floor apartments. These buildings were detailed in a variety of architectural styles, but most commonly had ornamental treatments that used simplified Queen Anne, Romanesque or Classical-style details. The inherent visual qualities of building materials, such as rough-cut stone or the reds and browns of the brick commonly used for Chicago buildings, were often among the most striking visual qualities of such buildings built with modest budgets.

Although most of the buildings in the Oakdale Avenue District are single-family houses or small two- or three-flats, it also contains three larger apartment buildings built during the District's period of significance that are characterized by their overall configuration, such as "corner" and "courtyard" apartment buildings, but with an overall scale, use of historic architectural styles, and fine craftsmanship of materials that allow these buildings to fit into the overall historic streetscape. Corner apartment buildings typically had larger footprints than two- or three-flats and were often built over two or more standard-width Chicago lots. They were usually three- or four-stories in height with multiple entries to apartments, and located at street intersections, sometimes with storefronts on ground floors. Courtyard apartment buildings were rarer, but were especially distinctive with their U- or E-shaped plans that wrapped apartments around landscaped courtyards that opened onto streets and provided additional light and air for a more densely laid-out building.

The presence of these larger apartment buildings reflects the increase in population density in the area as Lake View continued to develop as an urban neighborhood into the early 1900s. The corner apartment building at 859 W. Oakdale Ave. is the oldest of the three, dating from 1894, and combines Queen Anne-style pressed-metal ornament, including a fine side bay, with Romanesque-style stone detailing. Across the street at 858 W. Oakdale Ave. is a brick apartment building, built in 1900, with handsome brick bays and a very fine limestone entrance with Classical-style ornament. The half-courtyard building at 823-25 W. Oakdale Ave., built in 1927, has yellow brick wall trimmed with



Although the majority of apartment buildings in the District are two- and three-flats, there are several larger apartment buildings built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including (top) the corner apartment building at 858 W. Oakdale, (bottom left) the half-courtyard apartment building at 823-25 W. Oakdale, and (bottom right) the corner apartment building at 859 W. Oakdale.



cream-colored terra cotta in an eclectic Renaissance Revival style.

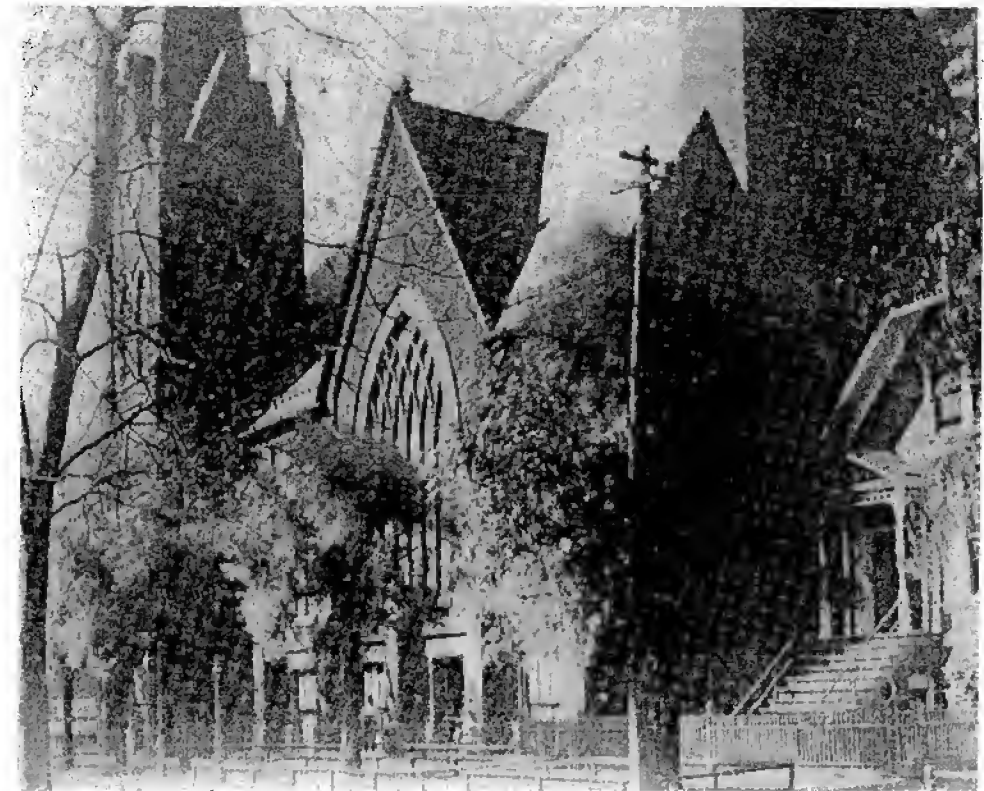
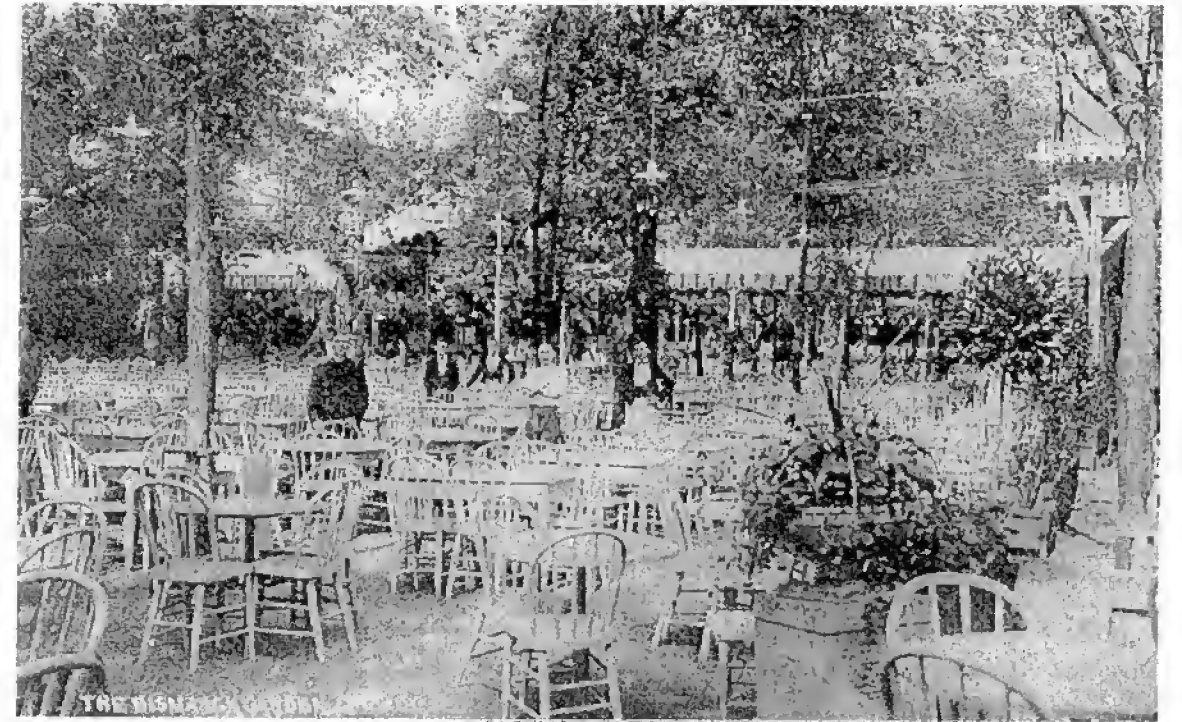
## EARLY OWNERS AND RESIDENTS

By 1900, Oakdale Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood had emerged as a flourishing middle-class community. According to the United States Censuses conducted in 1900, 1910, and 1920, the early residents of the Oakdale Avenue District were a mix of native-born Americans and immigrants, with Germans and Swedes forming the largest ethnic groups, followed by Irish and English. These residents tended to be middle-class in their job occupations, including book keepers, grocers, furniture manufacturers, and stock yards buyers. As such, Oakdale forms a “snapshot” of a middle-class Chicago neighborhood in the early 1900s and its geographic and ethnic origins of both native-born and foreign-born Americans.

More than a third of the households on Oakdale were headed by Illinois-born citizens or native-born Americans transplanted from other states. The census in 1900, for example, found that 10 households on Oakdale, out of 49, were headed by Illinois natives. In addition, Chicago attracted new residents from other parts of the United States. The City’s earliest residents in the 1830s had tended to come from northern states such as Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York. By the early 1900s, many middle- and upper-class Chicago families had roots in these and other states, and those on the 800-block of Oakdale were no exception. The census in 1900 shows that 12 of the families on Oakdale had heads of household that had been born in other states, including Indiana, Wisconsin, New York, and Ohio.

The rest of the households in the Oakdale Avenue District were headed in 1900 by immigrants from a variety of countries, with Germans predominating by far with 23 households. Beginning with the migration of progressive Germans to the United States in the wake of the failed 1848 revolutions in Europe, Germans had made up one of the largest immigrant groups in the United States, in general, and Chicago, in particular, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, establishing prosperous neighborhoods and important community anchors in cities and towns throughout much of the United States. In Chicago, the north side lakefront neighborhoods of Lincoln Park and Lake View had developed as strongly German communities by 1900. Here they established businesses, churches such as St. Alphonsus Roman Catholic Church, and civic organizations such as the Lincoln Park Turner Club on W. Diversey Pkwy.

By 1920, the 800-block of Oakdale remained strongly German and native-born American, but Swedish immigrants, the other most significant immigrant group in the history of Lake View, had begun to live there, along with other immigrants. During the early 1900s, Lake View became known for its Swedish stores, restaurants, social clubs, and churches, and many new Swedish immigrants bypassed more established Swedish neighborhoods, such as the Near North Side, in favor of Lake View. In addition, the 1910 and



Many early residents of the Lake View community area in general, and the Oakdale Avenue District in particular, were German or Swedish immigrants or of German or Swedish descent. Examples of two institutions that reflect the ethnic heritage of the larger Lake View neighborhood are (top) the Bismarck Gardens at Halsted and Grace, one of Lake View’s several German beer gardens, and (bottom) Trinity Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church at 1100 W. Barry.

1920 censuses show that residents on Oakdale hailed from a variety of other countries, including Switzerland, Austria, England, Ireland, Russia, Canada, and Belgium.

The buildings within the Oakdale Avenue District reflect the values and aspirations of the average Chicago family of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, striving for a solidly built and beautifully crafted home within which to establish roots. Census reports confirm that most of the buildings in the District were occupied by the original property owner for several years after purchasing the lot and constructing their home. Census reports also show that the majority of the homes in the District were consistently owner occupied. With a high-quality apartment on each floor, two- and three-flats provided property owners with a comfortable home and the opportunity to subsidize their mortgage payment by renting the other units.

Finely-crafted two- and three-flat buildings were especially popular with the emerging middle-class families that settled on Oakdale Avenue. Built on narrow lots, the flat's efficient use of interior space allowed for a sufficient number of rooms to accommodate large families. Census records show that the typical two- and three-flat in the District was often home to families consisting of four or more individuals. Additionally, members of extended families or even unrelated boarders frequently lived with a family. The strongly German character of the District is exemplified by the residents of the three-flat at 850 W. Newport where one flat was occupied by the building's original owner, John Hoffman, a musician of German descent, and his wife and two children, while the other flats in the building were home to other German families and their boarders.

## CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sec. 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Oakdale Avenue District be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

### ***Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.*

- The Oakdale Avenue District exemplifies the high-quality working- and middle-class residential architecture constructed in Chicago's neighborhoods during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as the City expanded outward into once-suburban areas and as the number of working- and middle-class residents greatly increased.

- The Oakdale Avenue District represents the importance of the City's first- and second-generation immigrant families to the development of Chicago and its neighborhoods such as Lake View.

### ***Criterion 4: Important Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The Oakdale Avenue District is a distinctive and remarkably intact group of small-scale "flat" architecture from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- The District is a visually consistent and unusual collection of Chicago two- and three-flats, an important building type in the development of Chicago neighborhoods.
- The District is distinctive for the fine detailing and craftsmanship on its buildings' cornices, porches, windows and doors that impart Queen Anne, Eastlake, Romanesque, and Classical influences, and for the high-quality use of materials including brick and limestone.

### ***Criterion 6: Distinctive Theme as a District***

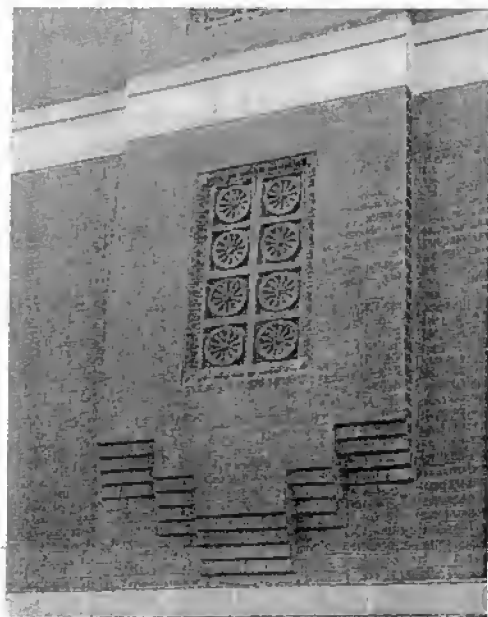
*Its representation of an architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other theme expressed through distinctive areas, districts, places, buildings, structures, works of art, or other objects that may or may not be contiguous.*

- The Oakdale Avenue District displays a distinct visual unity based on a consistent scale, building setbacks, design, size, use of materials, and overall detailing.
- The Oakdale Avenue District creates a distinctive and recognizable sense of place within the larger Lake View neighborhood.

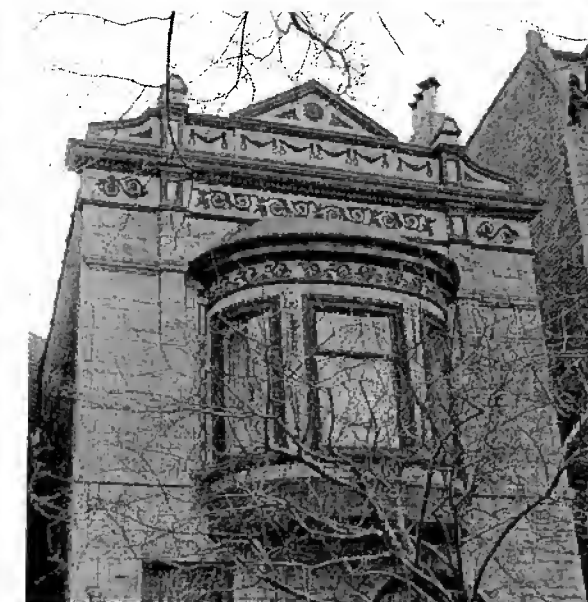
### ***Integrity Criterion***

*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.*

While intact residential buildings from the 1890s through the 1920s are found throughout Chicago, it is unusual to find a block-long collection of residences that combine the character and overall integrity in the manner that the Oakdale Avenue District possesses. Approximately 80 percent of the structures in the District were built during a relatively short 10-year period from 1890 to 1900. The remaining historic buildings were completed by 1927. (Three buildings, preliminarily defined by Landmarks staff as non-contributing, have been built since circa 1970.) The district demonstrates excellent integrity in both its overall streetscapes and individual buildings. The physical character of these buildings in terms of scale, setback from the street, entries, and general door and window configuration



The buildings in the Oakdale Avenue District display handsome craftsmanship in the use of historic building materials, including brick, stone, and terra cotta. Examples include (top left) 859 W. Oakdale, (top right) 855 W. Oakdale, (bottom left) 845 W. Oakdale, and (bottom right) 823-25 W. Oakdale.



The District's buildings also display fine examples of pressed-metal bays and cornices, including those at (top left) 855 W. Oakdale, (top right) 814 W. Oakdale, (bottom left) 859 W. Oakdale, and (bottom right) 826 W. Oakdale.



have remained consistent and work together to provide the onlooker with a strong sense of the overall character of the historic streetscapes.

Most buildings retain many of the physical characteristics that define their historic significance. These include historic wall materials, including brick and stone, as well as fine architectural details such as porches, pressed-metal bay windows and cornices, and other decorative features. Additionally, they continue to serve the same function a century or so after their construction with little discernable changes in style. Most importantly, the overall sense of place remains strong throughout the district.

Some minor changes to buildings within the District include the loss of a pressed-metal cornice on one building at 846 W. Oakdale Ave. (a common alteration for 19<sup>th</sup>-century Chicago buildings) and replacement of window sash, doors, and porch elements in some buildings. A number of porches have seen alterations, including the replacement of original wooden steps with concrete, the creation of new porches with brick piers, and the replacement of original cast- and wrought-iron railings with later wrought iron. The building at 824 W. Oakdale has had a protective masonry skimcoat applied to its original stone facade.

Despite these alterations, the Oakdale Avenue District retains a high degree of physical integrity and the ability to express its overall historic architectural and aesthetic value through its individual buildings and the visually consistent way they relate to each other. The District's streetscapes are unusually coherent in scale, setback, use of traditional materials (brick, stone, wood, and metal) and historic ornamental styles.

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

Whenever a building is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its preliminary evaluation of the Oakdale Avenue District, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

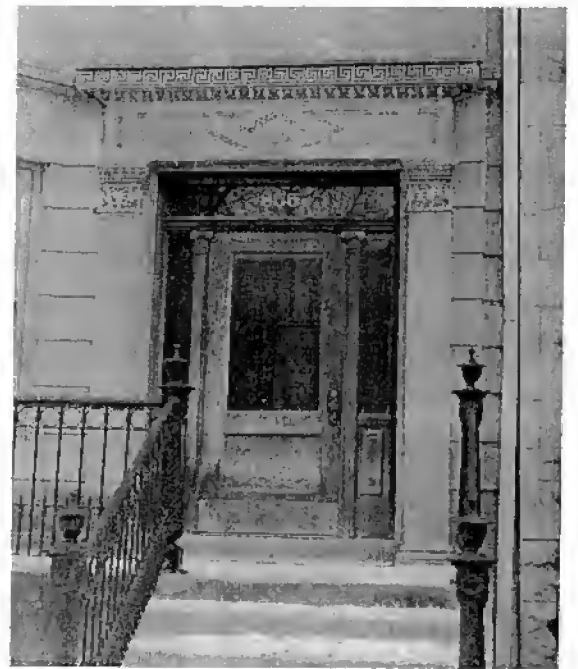
- all exterior building elevations, including rooflines, visible from public rights-of-way.



The Oakdale Avenue District retains excellent physical integrity. All but three of the District's buildings were built during its historic period of significance (c. 1890-1927), and these retain their original sites, relationship to the street and each other, and most historic exterior building features.

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Many of the District's buildings retain original entrance stoops, porch details, and doors. Examples include (top left) 833 W. Oakdale, (top right) the Mildred St. entrance to 859 W. Oakdale, (bottom left) 822 W. Oakdale, and (bottom right) 855 W. Oakdale.

Building Catalog

All buildings in the Oakdale Avenue District are preliminarily identified as “contributing” to the district unless specifically identified otherwise in the Building Catalog. The categorization of whether a property is contributing or non-contributing to the District represents a preliminary analysis and is provided as guidance for property owners and the public to anticipate how these properties would be treated under the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance. Individual property owners have the right to petition the Commission on Chicago Landmarks on whether a building is contributing or non-contributing to the district on a case-by-case basis as part of the permit review process, and the Commission reserves the right to make a final determination in accordance with the procedures established by the Ordinance and the Commission’s adopted Rules and Regulations.

Current Address	Original address	Description	Original Owner	Date of Construction	Architect / (Builder)	Contributing/ Non-Contributing (Preliminary)
814 W. Oakdale Av	1542 Oakdale	2-story brick two-flat	J. E. H. Hermsau	1891		contributing
815 W. Oakdale Av	1541 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted two-flat	Theodore Lewandowski	1891		contributing
816 W. Oakdale Av	1538 Oakdale	4-story brick-fronted apartment bldg.		c. 2000		non-contributing
820 W. Oakdale Av	1536 Oakdale	2-story brick two-flat	A. Toll	1916	E.N. Braucher	contributing
821 W. Oakdale Av	1537 Oakdale	3-story limestone-fronted three-flat	Theodore Lewandowski	1893		contributing
822 W. Oakdale Av	1534 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted two-flat	Groing & Haywood	1892		contributing
823-25 W. Oakdale Av	same	3-story brick half-courtyard apartment bldg.	Frank Plin	1927	Strauch	contributing
824 W. Oakdale Av	1532 Oakdale	3-story limestone-fronted three-flat	Oscar Bauer	1894		contributing
826 W. Oakdale Av	1530 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted two-flat	Mrs. E. B. Dryer	1893		contributing
829 W. Oakdale Av	1531 Oakdale	2-story brick two-flat	N. J. Voltename	1891		contributing
830 W. Oakdale	1528 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted house	L. Strauss	1903	L. Brodhag	contributing
831 W. Oakdale Av	1529 Oakdale	2-story brick two-flat		pre-1894		contributing
832 W. Oakdale Av	1524 Oakdale	4-story brick apartment bldg.		c. 1970		non-contributing
833 W. Oakdale Av	1527 Oakdale	2-story limesone-fronted two-flat	J. Baurle	1892		contributing
835 W. Oakdale Av	1525 Oakdale	2-story limesone-fronted two-flat	Mrs. M. Schwab	1893		contributing
837 W. Oakdale Av	1521 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted house	Jarvis & Conklin	1891		contributing
840 W. Oakdale Av	1516 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted house	Bockart & Taupel	1892		contributing
841 W. Oakdale Av	1519 Oakdale	2-story sandstone-fronted two-flat	John Wurtell	1894		contributing
844 W. Oakdale Av	same	3-story brick-faced house		c. 2003		non-contributing
845 W. Oakdale Av	1515 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted two-flat	D.C. Bayha	1897	Huehl & Schmld	contributing
846 W. Oakdale Av	1512 Oakdale	2-story brownstone-fronted house		pre-1894		contributing
847 W. Oakdale Av	1511 Oakdale	3-story limestone-fronted three-flat		c. 1900		contributing
850 W. Oakdale Av	1510 Oakdale	3-story limestone-fronted three-flat	John P. Hoffman	1894		contributing
851 W. Oakdale Av	1509 Oakdale	2-story brick two-flat	Mrs. C.M. Lapierre	1906	H.C. Koll, (W.T. Baaba)	contributing
852 W. Oakdale Av	1506 Oakdale	3-story limestone-fronted three-flat		1894		contributing
853 W. Oakdale Av	1507 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted two-flat	Charles Hermenn	1894		contributing
854 W. Oakdale Av	1504 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted two-flat	M. Bratz	1898	(A. Wokland)	contributing
855 W. Oakdale Av	1503 Oakdale	2-story limestone-fronted two-flat	Wm. Lanz	1898	S.H. Levy	contributing
858 W. Oakdale Av / 2943 N. Mildred Av	1500 Oakdale	3-story brick apartment building	Henry Ohlhorst	1900	J.T. Hetherington, (Sebold & Co.)	contributing
859 W. Oakdale Av	1501 Oakdale	3-story limestone-fronted flats	Louis Schatt	1894		contributing
2915 N. Mildred Av	same	3-story brick apartment building		c. 1910 - 15		contributing

Address Ranges

Oakdale, 814-858 (evens)  
Oakdale, 815-859 (odds)  
Mildred, 2915-2945 (odds)

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From Clark, *The Lake View Saga*: p. 5 (top left & middle left).

From Moffat, *The “L”: The Development of Chicago’s Rapid Transit System, 1888-1932*: p. 5 (bottom left & right).

From Pacyga and Skerrett, *Chicago, City of Neighborhoods*: p. 23.

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; TDD, (312-744-2958); (312-744-9140) fax; web site, <http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks>*

*This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the landmark ordinance enacted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*